

# Senior Recital

An Honors Thesis (MUSP 498)

By

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Thesis Advisor  
Dr. Erwin Mueller

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erwin Mueller", with a stylized, flowing script.

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## Abstract

Selecting and preparing pieces for a recital is an arduous process. I have made this recital completely my own, with no repertoire being assigned to me. I wanted to do this because I have to play at my ability level while considering audience reception as well. This concept is something very important to me and I do not think that it is given enough consideration in the modern music world. I want my selected program to be entertaining without compromising the quality of the repertoire. Finding that balance is more difficult than it seems, but I want people to learn that classical music can be just as exciting as a rock concert. Most of all I want people to walk away with a sense of awe and be inspired to make music a part of their lives.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Erwin Mueller for advising me not only on this project, but also on anything I needed over the past four years. If not for his encouragement I would surely not have made it this far as a musician.

I would like to thank my sisters in Sigma Alpha Iota for giving me a network of friends bonded forever by a love of music.

I would like to thank my family for supporting me in my musical endeavors and for showing up in impressive numbers from around the country to attend my recitals.

When I began preparing my senior recital, I kept two things in mind. Since the recital would be adjudicated, I needed to pick repertoire that was at my ability level, but I also strive to keep everything I program enjoyable to my audience. My musical philosophy comes down to one simple principle. You should enjoy the music you play. It seems obvious and simple, but many people forget it. It is easy to be swept up in technique and theory and to forget to consider the most basic purpose of music: to be heard. The bond between musician and audience is precious and magical. It is a bond to be respected and I always make it a point to consider my audience when I set up a program.

My favorite category of percussion music is keyboards. If it were possible, I would give a recital completely on keyboards. As it was, four of my seven pieces were mallet pieces. Keyboards are the easiest percussion instrument to listen to simply because they are pitched. I enjoy the marimba especially because of its range and timbre. The marimba is a relatively new instrument, having only about one hundred years of history. As a result, marimba repertoire is extremely diverse from arrangements of classical pieces to new age styles. I enjoy very much sifting through new music and discovering new sounds.

I decided to open my recital with a fantastic marimba concerto that has never before been played at Ball State. Casey Cangelosi is notorious for flirting with the edge of what is physically possible in his compositions. Often this results in his pieces being etudes, by definition not audience-friendly pieces. His marimba

concerto however, is wonderfully crafted. The first movement, despite its constant rapid stream of notes, presents an easy melody to follow. It was definitely a challenge to bring out the phrasing in such a fast-moving piece, but this movement was one of my favorite pieces on the recital. The second movement is slow and dark in stark contrast to the first movement. There is some wonderful interplay between the marimba and the piano accompaniment that brings a haunting atmosphere to the piece. The third movement I did not play. To me, it reads more like an etude and I do not think that an audience would enjoy it since I certainly did not enjoy starting to learn it.

I knew when I started planning that I had to play something by Eric Sammut. He is my favorite percussion composer and there are only a couple of his pieces that I have not thoroughly enjoyed. More recently, Sammut has started arranging classic pieces for marimba solo. I settled on his arrangement of Chopin's 'The Revolutionary.' It is strange, but I found that I enjoyed this piece less once I listened to the original Chopin piece for piano solo. Sammut does a wonderful job capturing the atmosphere of the piece, but Chopin's ten talented fingers will always outshine my four mallets. Still, it was incredibly fun to play and well received by my audience.

I have a hard time playing the vibraphone for a number of reasons, the foremost of which is the available repertoire. There are only a handful of vibraphone pieces that I ever heard in the percussion studio and most of them are unbearably long and slow. There is an arrangement of Debussy's 'Claire De Lune' that has been popular recently, but while it is pretty, I did not want to play it. I was getting tired of hearing it at least once a week. By chance I found in a stack of music from high

school a piece by Gary Gibson that I was never able to play. I chose the third piece in his collection, 'Carillon.' It has an odd key signature and an interesting harmonic progression that make it challenging for me as a player and enjoyable to the listener.

For the grand finale, I chose the duet 'Octabones' by Adi Morag, a contemporary Israeli composer. The second I heard this piece online I knew that I had to play it myself. Luckily another girl in the percussion studio was also interested. It is very fast paced with plenty of extended techniques. This piece was very challenging to put together, but the final performance was worth every hour of work that we put into it. It requires two marimbas facing each other so as to allow the players to reach across and play on the other marimba's bars. It is based on the octotonic scale, which gives a unique sound and separates it from most western music. In fact, the entire piece is covered in tritones. In traditionally harmonized music, the tritone is extremely dissonant. However, because of the octotonic scale Morag is able to utilize tritones without the dissonance being as striking as in traditional harmonies. This piece was without question the overwhelming audience favorite. Not only is it audibly different from what most people are used to, but also visually stimulating. Both parts are extremely active and we were in constant motion to either end of our instrument.

The second most popular piece on my recital was Thierry de Mey's 'Musique de Table.' It falls into the miscellaneous category of percussion. This category tends to be the most fun. It is full of things that no one expects to see on stage when they go to a concert or recital. Unfortunately, that also means that most of these pieces tend to be hokey and just for show. This piece, while definitely revolving around its

visual appeal, did require skill to play. It is for three people on specially made wooden tables. The score is so beautiful that I am contemplating having a few pages framed. De Mey had to create a unique notation system to express different hand slaps and slides across the table. There are extensive notes and illustrations in the score explaining what each symbol means. It was incredibly fun to interact with each other during this piece and keep each other in check when the tempo started to waver.

Picking out pieces for the other areas of percussion was more difficult for me simply because I do not much enjoy them. They have their place of course, but I have a hard time accepting their value as solo instruments meant for the stage. The timpani, for instance, are completely hit or miss for audience friendliness. There are a great many pieces that are challenging but not fun to listen to and even more that are the other way around. Popular in the percussion studio right now is Fred Hinger's 'Opus I.' I do enjoy it and it is difficult to play, but that is only in the second half. Unfortunately it has a very long and slow introduction, which has put me to sleep before. When Doc Mueller showed me Darin Kamstra's 'Bateria,' I expected it to be more of the same, but was pleasantly surprised. It is the most challenging timpani piece that I have ever attempted and I think it was well worth it. It used a variety of mallets and brushes and a section in which I had to forgo mallets altogether and play with my hands. The piece had a definite dance feel with many samba rhythms. Each section was exciting and as a bonus no one in the percussion studio had heard it before. I truly enjoy presenting music that no one has heard before. I think it is something all musicians should strive to do especially when their

audience is other musicians. It broadens horizons and keeps things interesting for everyone.

Something I do not enjoy is concert snare drum. I do not enjoy playing it and I do not enjoy listening to it. I cannot think of any exceptions. However, it is a requirement that as a performance major I demonstrate my skills in this necessary area of percussion. All I can do for my audience is to select a short piece. If it were up to me, I would not subject them to such an assault on their ears. Matthew Beck's 'Excerpt Etude' filled the requirements. It is made up of excerpts of the snare parts from major orchestral and symphonic works laced together and is only two pages long. This is the only requirement for which I purposely did only the minimum and even that I did under protest.

Everything that I play on stage has meaning to me. That is a contributing factor to why people enjoy my recitals. It is the persistence of boring repertoire that keeps people away from percussion recitals. Most people do not listen to music that they do not enjoy. The simple solution then is to play fun music. It is easier as an audience member to respond to a performance when it is clear that the performer is enjoying himself. I, for instance, do not enjoy jazz. I never have. However Ball State has an incredibly talented saxophonist and it is purely because of him that I enjoyed the jazz concert I attended. So much of his soul was poured into his instrument that I was able to connect with him as an audience member and appreciate his passion. It is this feeling that I strive to inspire in my audience and I start by always enjoying the music I play.





## **School of Music**

### **Senior Recital**

Friday, April 19, 2013

Pruis Hall, 5:30pm

## **ROBIN HIRSHBERG, percussion**

**with**

**Galit Gertsenzon-Fromm, piano**

**Carolyn Borcharding, Anna Graham, Ed Mellen, percussion**

**Casey Cangelosi**  
(b. 1982)

**Concerto for Marimba No. 2**  
I  
II

**Matthew Beck**

**Etude for Snare Drum**

**Gary Gibson**  
(b. 1960)

**Carillon**

**Thierry de Mey**  
(b. 1945)

**Musique de Table**

**Frédéric Chopin**  
(1810-1849)  
*Arr. Eric Sammut*

**The Revolutionary**

**Darin Kamstra**  
(b. 1977)

**Bateria**

**Adi Morag**  
(b. 1976)

**Octabones**

Robin Hirshberg is a student of Erwin C. Mueller and is a member of Sigma Alpha Iota, International Fraternity for women in the field of music.  
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree Bachelor of Music in Music Performance.

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School of Music  
COMING EVENTS

**Doctor of Arts Performance Recital: Briana Sosenheimer, soprano**

Saturday, April 20, Sursa Hall, 3:00pm

**Graduate Recital: Julian Orlando Vera, baritone**

Saturday, April 20, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

**Ball State Chamber and Concert Choirs**

Sunday, April 21, Sursa Hall, 3:00pm

**Faculty Artist Series: Kathleen Maurer, mezzo-soprano,**

**Mei Zhong, soprano and James Helton, piano**

Sunday, April 21, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

**Junior Recital: Timothy Barnett, violin**

Monday, April 22, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

**Ball State Concert Band**

Monday, April 22, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

**MTNA Student Recital**

Tuesday, April 23, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

**Arts Alive Concert Series: Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet**

Tuesday, April 23, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

**Brass Chamber Music Concert**

Wednesday, April 24, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

**Senior Recital: William Smith, guitar**

Thursday, April 25, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

**Sophomore Recital: Nigorabonu Miliyeva, cello**

Friday, April 26, Choral Hall, 5:30pm

**Ball State Wind Ensemble & Symphony Band**

Friday, April 26, Sursa Hall, 7:30pm

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